

REINFORCING COMMUNITY:
AN ASIAN CULTURAL COMPLEX IN AN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

A Thesis

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INTRODUCTION

February 2011, it was the time for the annual Chinese New Year Celebration in the local Cincinnati Chinese community again. This is also the first time I attend this event since I came to States. Sitting quietly at the middle of the auditorium, I watched what was going on. The auditorium was predominantly decorated with the red color symbolizing joy and prosperous. The seats of auditorium were filled by Chinese American men, women, and children. The organizers for the events were busy preparing for the stage show; many stage designer were adjusting the lighting environment and music to ensure the best performance, several men were busy adjusting the video camera in good position for the best shot; some ladies were greeting acquaintance and chatting to each other with delight and excitement on their faces; the kids were running around and chasing each other, laughing loudly. Everyone seemed to be enjoying this unique moment of celebration. There is no doubt that it was their time, a special day for all of them to unite with the family members and make connection with their ethnic brothers and sisters. They were celebrating their traditional festival here in US just like how they celebrate them in their home country. The Chinese community, thus, build their mutual connection and cultural recognition through participating in such an event.

According to the census 2010, the population of Chinese American has reached 3.5 million, representing 1.1% of the American's entire population. This figure stands for 50 percent increase from the Chinese American population in 2000. Chinese American also claims the largest subgroup of Asian American population. They were distributed in every state, and the top three that has most Chinese community are California, New York and Texas. They engage in every field ranging from engineering, medicine, investment banking, academia to shopping assistant, waitress and laundrymen and babysitter. As many researches indicate, they make great contribution to the economic and social development of United States. As the oldest yet dynamic immigration ethnic, their presence of unique identity enriches the diversity of the American's culture. This increasing social and economic visibility of Chinese Americans, among the

conspicuous population growth, has made the research of Chinese American community particularly interesting.

My interest of the Chinese American community began from my first visit to Chinatown in New York City. That was about 1 month later after I set foot on US, I departed from the small town where I studied and went to New York for a field trip. Right at the moment I walked out of subway entrance along the stairs, I was hit by an eyeful of Chinese elements as well as a highly active and bustling neighborhood: the bilingual shop sign hung in the facade of the store, the cured roof attached to the cornice of the building, the \$4 Kung Pao Chicken sold in the restaurant. The prosperous fruit and fish markets are providing the freshest goods to the citizens; several regional Chinese organizations are holding services and events particularly for the community members. All at once they took me back to the embrace of my motherland, the other shore of the ocean, where I have been living for 20 years. My anxiety as the new-comer went away and I quite enjoyed lingering in this familiar environment. I guess this is what a community offers me, a sense of belongingness, a place where your culture and value are rooted and a feeling that you can have something in common with its residents. It provides the people with their physical and psychological needs, helps new immigrants to overcome the difficulties during their early settlement, and offer a place for community member to share their cultural recognition. The Chinatown, this special neighborhood, plays an important role in the well-being of Chinese American community, thus becomes inevitable and indispensable.

The dynamic of Chinatown in New York left a deep impression on me even after I came back. I continued my interest in the local Chinese community. The place I am living and studying is a small countryside in Butler County Ohio. Like most of the suburban area in US, it is a highly dispersed area sprinkled with small towns and cities. Compared to the visibility of Chinatown in New York, the Chinese community here seems quite invisible. There is no substantial business and residential concentration or clusters that would constitute a "Chinatown", and the total Chinese population is less dense than the Chinatown in New York. There is no strong conflict or highlight about this ethnic, making people almost forget the existing of them. But the evidence of their presence is undoubted: the demographic data shows

there are 1861 Chinese Americans in Butler County¹, excluding the number of temporary residents enrolling in schools and colleges. The evidence can also be given when I walk into the several local Chinese running businesses such as Chinese supermarket and restaurants and see groups of strangers with the same skin color smiling at me.

So I start to pay attention to this special Chinese community, a community that is in suburban Ohio, a community that scatters around the area, a community which seems quite different from Chinatown. What's the current situation of this local community? Are the emotional and mental requirements of the community members satisfied? Do the community organizers and cultural institutions succeeded in creating a visible and indispensable ethnic community? Is the Chinese community here still a strong, cohesive and dynamic community? How can we improve the cultural identity and life quality of the local Chinese American Community?

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are several researches and surveys regarding the assessments of the needs and future expectations of the Chinese American community in several Chinatowns across United States. In 2010, the Chinatown working Group² conducted a comprehensive plan based on the input gathered from the Chinese community in New York in order to improve the greater Chinatown area. The plan propose suggestions in the aspects of affordability, cultural & historical preservation, economic development, education & schools, immigration affair & social service, parks & recreations, traffic & transportation and zoning³. In 2008, another people's plan was proposed by O.U.R. Waterfront Coalition⁴ in response to the proposed redevelopment of east river front. Surveys and meetings are conducted among the local

¹ 2010 US Census.

² Chinatown Working Group (CWG) is a community-based planning initiative on the future of Chinatown in New York City. The objective of their work is to support the community's residents, workers, businesses and visitors. The members are Chinatown's stakeholders, representing the benefit of the Chinatown community.

³ It is a unpublished report which can be reached online at <http://www.chinatownworkinggroup.org/CWG-PAPandINTRO-01-08-10.pdf>

⁴ O.U.R Waterfront Coalition is a community-based organization and tenant associations representing residents of the lower East Side and Chinatown including CAAAV organizing Asian Communities, the Urban Justice Center's Community Development Project (UJC), Good Old Lower East Side, Jews for Racial and Economic Justice, Public Housing Residents of the Lower East Side, Hester Street Collaborative, the Lower East Side Ecology Center, Two Bridges Neighborhood Council and University Settlement.

community enabling them to develop their own visioning plan for waterfront. This plan articulates the needs of the community by carefully gathering and implementing specific ideas and activities, services and business that the community had voiced and prioritized⁵. Similarly, another research, "Converting Chinatown: A Snapshot of a Neighborhood Becoming Unaffordable and Unlivable" was conducted by CAAAV grounded in the experiences of residents in 2008. It provides a clear view of the impact of gentrification on New York City's Chinatown. The report indicated how the current developing projects had influenced the community's cultural fabric and had resulted in massive disadvantages among the local business and community members. There are also plans for Chinatowns in other metropolitans. "Chinatown Master Plan 2010: Community Vision for the Future"⁶ outlines the vision and frame work for future growth and expansion and improvements to the quality of life for Boston's Chinatown community. The master plan is based on the input collected at the community meeting, focus groups and interviews. It then provides a set of recommendations for developing and improving the physical elements of the neighborhood including streetscapes, civic spaces and infrastructures.

There is a rich literature addressing the issues and needs of Chinese American community from sociological field of view. Chalsa M. Loo's "Chinatown: Most time, Hard Time"⁷ provides an understanding of the life problems and major needs of Chinese American population in San Francisco. Based on an interview survey of residents of Chinatown, it illustrates the major concerns and issues of this minority group in the aspect of neighborhood, mental health, employment, language and cultural barrier, and quality of life. The "Chinese week: building Chinese American identity and community through festivity in metropolitan Phoenix," by Wei Zeng and Wei Li⁸, documents the building of contemporary Chinese American identity and community in metropolitan Phoenix through an annual celebration of the Chinese New Year. They are largely a community without geographic boundary and they maintain their culture and identity through social

⁵ It is a unpublished report which can be reached online at http://www.urbanjustice.org/pdf/publications/peoples_plan.pdf

⁶ It is a unpublished report which can be reached online at <http://www.brownwalkerplanners.com/files/CTMP2010.pdf>

⁷ Chalsa M. Loo. 1991. Chinatown: Most Time, Hard Time. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.

⁸ Ling, Huping. 2009. Asian America: forming new communities, expanding boundaries. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 154-178.

networks and community events. Zeng and Li view the ethnic festival Chinese week as a venue to understand Chinese American culture and identity formation, through which the cultural or invisible Chinese American community is constructed. There are also researches and survey focusing on the needs of certain groups or targeting certain issues. "Struggling to be heard: the unmet needs of Asian Pacific American children"⁹, describes many sociological problems among Asian American young people. These issues include mental health, delinquents, disabilities, limited English ability and cultural difference. In "Leisure preference and open space needs in an urban Chinese American community"¹⁰, the author explored the needs of leisure space of 12-60 yr old Chinese American of Chicago's Chinatown, the result shows that some activities have significant meaning to maintain the Chinese culture and provide foundation for the planning and development of a new park.

METHODOLOGY

At the local level, I searched all the data regarding the demographic information in Butler County from 2010 U.S. Census and the annual reports of the immigration and Naturalization Service. Besides, American public Media offered me some information about public perception of the Chinese communities. In the local government website, I found a great deal of information about the Butler community development, cultural and entertainment facilities, and public services. I also used google map to found the numbers and locations of the local Chinese business including restaurants, therapist, grocery store and ect. I also visited the websites of the local Chinese organizations for the cultural events and public services they are holding annually.

Then, a survey was conducted with the local Chinese community. A questionnaire was designed and then sent out by the contact information provided by the local Chinese Organizations. The survey asked the respondents to estimates the importance of each service and programs proposed, by choosing from the value 1-4. The survey respondents are diverse in terms of age, sex, resident status, professional,

⁹ Pang, Valerie Ooka, and Li-Rong Lilly Cheng. 1998. *Struggling to be heard: the unmet needs of Asian Pacific American children*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

¹⁰ Zhang, T. (1,2,3), and P.H. (4) Gobster. "Leisure preferences and open space needs in an urban Chinese American community." *Journal Of Architectural And Planning Research* 15, no. 4 (December 1, 1998): 338-355. Scopus®, EBSCOhost (accessed March 4, 2013)

income, the length of years staying in US and zip code, ensuring the accuracy of the survey result. In addition, case studies from secondary sources will also be conducted as a compare in order to understand how a community's identity and life style and can be developed and promoted through planning of architectural spaces.

BUTLER COUNTY CHINESE COMMUNITY PROFILE

Butler County is located in the southeast corner of Ohio and it belongs to the greater Cincinnati Area. The whole population of the butler county is 368130, with the Chinese population of 1867, representing 0.5% of the whole population. There are several local stores serving the local Chinese community, including three grocery stores¹¹. Several Chinese restaurants are scattered in and around butler county region, offering authentic Chinese hotspot, buffet and stir fry. There are also Chinese therapist and massage store locating nearby, promoting the lifestyle of the local community. Fourteen Chinese organizations¹² were set up organizing events and providing services for the local Chinese community.

Butler County represents the type of Chinese community which is formed conforming to the trends of moving to the suburbs. This community is differentiated from the traditional "Chinatown". First, instead of concentrating in one relatively small and dense populated neighborhood, the geographic distribution of the local community member is quite dispersed. Such dispersed residence plus the small size of the community have decided that the local Chinese American community is not as geographically conspicuous as the so-called Chinatown in other larger metropolitan region (Fig. 1). To some extent, it is also different from the suburban Chinese American communities in those large metropolitan regions that have emerged in recent decades. It is much smaller in size and the residences of its members are more scattered. Secondly, the demographic characteristics of the local Chinese American community are much different from those of the traditional "Chinatown." While the people in the Chinatown are often

¹¹ Three grocery stores include Jungle Jim's, Cincinnati CAM Asia Supermarket, Yung Chen Oriental Supermarket.

¹² Fourteen Chinese Organization includes Cincinnati Chinese Church, Cincinnati contemporary Chinese school, Cincinnati Chinese culture learning association, Chinese students and scholars association (University of Cincinnati), Greater Cincinnati Chinese music society, Cincinnati Chinese chamber of commerce, Greater Cincinnati Chinese Community Connection, Chinese American association of Cincinnati, National Association of Asian American Professional Cincinnati, The Greater Cincinnati Chapter of Families with Children from China, Chinese American Medical Association of Greater Cincinnati.

associated with lower socioeconomic status and non-English speaking immigrants, the background of the local Chinese American community contrasts greatly with this image. According to the Bureau of Census, in 2010, the median Asian household income of the town is \$71,382, higher than the Butler County average of \$54,541. In terms of the occupation of the labor force in the town, nearly one fourth of employment population working 16 years over is in Management, business, science, and arts occupations. Based on these figures, it is reasonable to consider Local Chinese Community as middle to upper-middle class neighborhood.

This new mode of the Chinese American community has been proposed by the Asian American scholar, Huping Ling, as “cultural community”. “A cultural community does not necessarily have particular physical boundaries. Instead it is defined by social boundaries, in terms of community organizations, Chinese churches, and Chinese language schools, as well as the city’s Chinese restaurants, grocery stores, and other service business. The cultural activities organized by Chinese groups generated a sense of community, and this in return fostered a social and emotional space in which the cultural community would root.”¹³ Hoggett, P. also defined this non-geographically defined community as “interest or elective community” where “people share a common characteristic other than place. They are linked together by factors such as religious belief, sexual orientation, occupation or ethnic origin. Development in what might be called the sociology of identity and selfhood have played an important role in opening out the conceptual space within which non-place forms of community can be understood.”¹⁴

This thesis will investigate the cultural and social aspects of two communities: the Chinese immigrant community and the temporary residents living in Butler County. The residents of Butler County refers to those who own or rent in the Butler County municipality. A broader meaning of the term community encompasses a “group of people with a common characteristic or interest living together within a larger society”, as defined by Merriam Webster Dictionary. Thus, the target user for the Center will include more than just Chinese immigrants and their children. The program of the Center will redefine

¹³ Ling, Huping. 2004. *Chinese St. Louis: from enclave to cultural community*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 12.

¹⁴ Paul Hoggett. 1997. *Contested communities : experiences, struggles, policies*. Bristol, England: Policy Press, 7.

“community” by including people from various ethnic and social backgrounds, without physical limitations to who is included in the city limits. While the center will use Chinese and Chinese-American culture to organize the program for the center, it will be a community center that welcomes individuals from all backgrounds. The Chinese community will not be limited by generational, socioeconomic, or geographic definitions. Professor of sociology and Asian American studies at UCLA, Min Zhou, writes that “the ethnic community should not be understood simply as a neighborhood where a particular ethnic group’s members and/or businesses concentrate, or as a geographically unbounded racial or ethnic identity in the abstract. Rather, it contains various ethnic institutions, such as ethnic businesses, socio-cultural organizations, and interpersonal networks established, operated and maintained by group members.” (Zhou 160). The Chinese community in America extends beyond physical boundaries and across generations. The program will cater to the children of immigrants, as well as the elderly and new immigrants.

CULTURE

Merriam Webster defines culture as the “set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization”. This thesis will explore the nuances of Chinese and American cultures in order to find commonalities between the two. In order to educate the public about the cultural traditions of Chinese immigrants, it is important to understand what attitudes, values, goals, and practices characterize the Chinese immigrant community.

Chinese culture has an extensive history that has been refined over several centuries. While attitudes, customs, language, and traditions vary between the different regions of China, traditional Chinese art forms are shared nationally. Traditional art forms include, but are not limited to Chinese folk dance and music, Chinese opera, calligraphy, painting, poetry, martial arts, and games. These are the values that Chinese community centers in China and Chinese cultural centers in America choose to emphasize. In addition to these traditional art forms, this thesis will also include cooking and food that showcases the variety of cuisine found in China and the craftsmanship found in carving, prints, and furniture making. Though dishes vary between the regions of China, it is a cultural aspect shared and loved by people regardless of their socioeconomic or ethnic backgrounds. These are the shared beliefs and values of the Chinese and

Chinese immigrant communities. These values will be explored in the program for the Chinese community center.

Chinese-American youth culture is harder to define because of the unique blend of American and Chinese culture. According to Zhou's research in her book *Contemporary Chinese America: Immigration, Ethnicity, and Community Transformation*, the children of Chinese immigrants tend to move away from the ethnic enclave in order to integrate into American society. Traditionally, Chinese-American youth have used Chinese school as social networking that has helped the second generation form its own community and culture. The Center will include space for classrooms and host after school programs that will also serve as gathering spaces for the youth.

QUESTIONNAIRE

I prepared the questionnaire to survey the Chinese community of Butler County's residents regarding the desires and needs. This survey not only determines physical and mental needs of the local Chinese community, but will guide the proposal and planning for the future development of the local Chinese resident.

COMMUNITY PHYSICAL AND MENTAL NEEDS SURVEY

INSTRUCTION: I would like you to tell me two things about the statement: how important it is to you that the following services are in the local Chinese community in Butler County, and how satisfied you are with each service.

Please circle the appropriate score using the following scale:

1-completely unimportant

2-unimportant

3-important

4-very important

1-not satisfy

2-just so so

3-satisfy

4-very satisfy

	How important is it to you				Are you satisfied	
Availability of Chinese supermarket and grocery stores	1	2	3	4	Yes	No
Availability of authentic Chinese restaurants <i>e.g. hot pot, stir fry, ro main</i>	1	2	3	4	Yes	No
Availability of Chinese medical service <i>e.g. Chinese therapist, massage stores and herbs stores</i>	1	2	3	4	Yes	No
Availability of parks and adult recreation facilities <i>e.g. Outdoor Tennis court, outdoor swimming pool, skateboard parks, golf course, basketball court, indoor ice arena</i>	1	2	3	4	Yes	No
Availability of senior programs and facilities	1	2	3	4	Yes	No
Availability of youth and preschool children programs and facilities <i>e.g. baseball/softball field, multi-purpose field, playground</i>	1	2	3	4	Yes	No
Availability of leisure entertainment <i>e.g. Kara OK, game room, majiang room, party room, ball room</i>	1	2	3	4	Yes	No
Availability of cultural facility <i>e.g. library, museum, gallery, movie theater, auditorium</i>	1	2	3	4	Yes	No
Adult classes providing training <i>e.g. employment training, language training</i>	1	2	3	4	Yes	No
Chinese cultural classes <i>e.g. Calligraphy, Traditional Dancing, Ink Drawing, arts and craft</i>	1	2	3	4	Yes	No
Opportunity to participate in religious activities at local Chinese Church	1	2	3	4	Yes	No
Chinese Language School	1	2	3	4	Yes	No
Chinese Daycare Center	1	2	3	4	Yes	No
Availability of Adequate Transportation	1	2	3	4	Yes	No
Ability to get help from community organization <i>e.g. helping for settle down, employment inquiry, immigration inquiry</i>	1	2	3	4	Yes	No
Ability to participate in local Chinese community event <i>e.g. holidays, celebrations, festivals, disasters</i>	1	2	3	4	Yes	No
Opportunity to meet other community members in public	1	2	3	4	Yes	No

<i>places, everyday social life and meeting places</i>						
<i>Availability of agencies providing services e.g. fast delivery, travel package, discount air ticket, Chinese banks</i>	1	2	3	4	Yes	No
<i>Availability of affordable temporary housing e.g. hotels, short-term renting house</i>	1	2	3	4	Yes	No
<i>Opportunity to exhibition of Chinese culture to the other ethnic community</i>	1	2	3	4	Yes	No

RESPONDENTS:

Survey respondents were asked to look at the list of activities and mark off how important is these activities and how satisfied they are with the current situation in Butler County. The survey has received 42 valid responses and the responses are illustrated in the following chart and summarized below.

Chinese supermarket and grocery stores was considered very important to almost over three quarter of residents (71.4%), but only a full third (35.7%) believe the current situation of grocery stores are satisfactory.

Authentic Chinese restaurants had the most personal importance (80.9%) of any of the programs listed. And 42.9 percent of respondents felt satisfied about the availability of various Chinese authentic restaurants.

Chinese medical service was also assumed very important and important by a total of 85.7 percent of the respondents while the majority of them felt there is still much room to improve the medical service for the butler county residents.

Outdoor parks and recreational facilities would be used by 66.7 percent of respondents with a 45.2 percent believing that they need better facilities and spaces for outdoor activities.

Senior program and facilities is an important addition for 59.5 percent of respondents, while 66.7 percent think are not fully satisfied with the current programs that provided for seniors.

Youth and preschool children programs and facilities would be used by respondents of 59.5 percent of resident, however another 71.4 percent felt not very satisfied.

More than ninety percent of respondent are desirous of leisure entertainment, with 54.7 percent feeling satisfied by the facilities that currently exists in their lives.

Availability of cultural facility: almost half of the local resident believe it is useful to have cultural facilities such as gallery, movie theatre, auditorium, and 42.3 percent is very satisfied with the cultural facilities they have.

Adults classes was considered important by 78.5 percent of the respondents, but 40 percent of the residents feel satisfactory.

Chinese cultural classes, available for Chinese kid to learn calligraphy, traditional dancing and ink drawing is important for 57% of the respondent, and there are 57.1% of them who think the classes are satisfactory.

Only 35.7 percent of local residents are interested in taking part in religious activities at local Chinese church, yet almost half of respondents (45.2%) think they are satisfactory.

Chinese language school would be used by 23.7 percent of responding households, while a resounding additional 59.6 percent think they are satisfied.

The third most popular activity on the list, almost half of all respondents were interested in a community daycare center for their own households, while an additional 13.8 percent feel they are satisfied.

Adequate transportation are of personal interest to only one in five respondents, however 55.1 percent believe that they are satisfied with that.

Getting help from the community organization is an interest to members of at least 29.6 percent of households. However, almost one half of respondents believe they are satisfied.

Participating in local Chinese event are of great importance to 64.2 of the respondents, however only 23.8 percent believe the chance for them to participate in these event are satisfactory.

64.2 percent of population think it is important to have the opportunity to meet other community members, while 33.3 percent feel the opportunity for them is satisfied.

Agency providing service such as fast delivery and Chinese bank are important to over half of the residents, however only 19 percent think the service are satisfactory.

Affordable temporary housing are of personal interest to 54.8 percent respondents, however 14.3 percent believe the temporary housing provided are satisfactory.

Exhibition of Chinese culture are important to 88% of the population, however 78.6 percent believe that they need improvement.

Chart Title

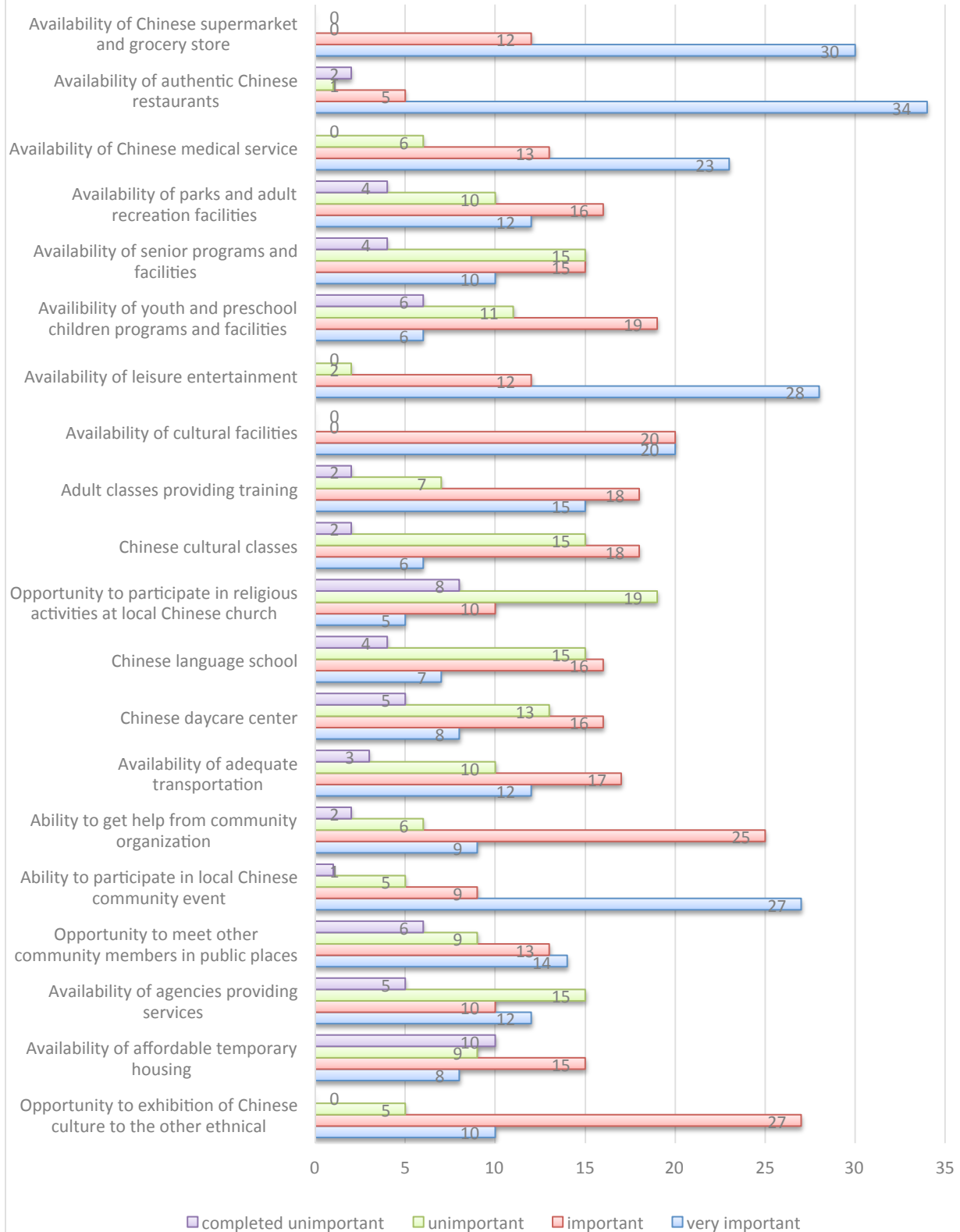
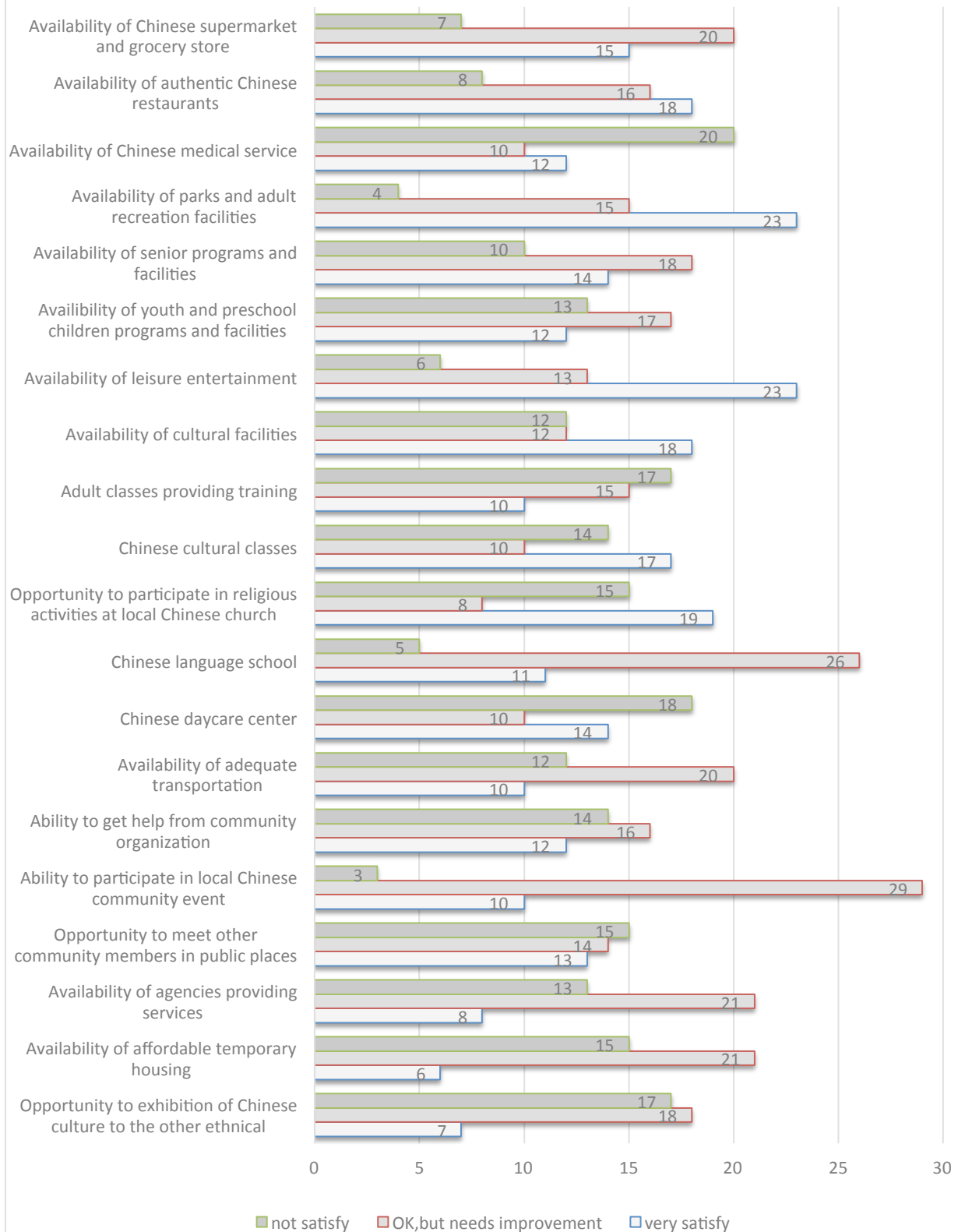


Chart Title



DESIGN OBJECTIVE:

The Chinese Community Center will combine public and residential facilities, in order to create a new center for the Chinese American community in Butler County, Ohio. The design and layout of the village will reflect traditional Chinese planning blended with modern American architecture. This synthesis will reflect the duality of immigrant identity.

The public program for the village is meant to serve as a community gathering space and educational facility that will teach the public about Chinese American heritage.

Programmatic elements such as the restaurant are meant to welcome people from different communities and ethnic backgrounds. The classrooms, theater/auditorium, and exhibit space will educate the public about the rich Chinese American heritage. A series of courtyards and open spaces will serve the residents and visitors and help alleviate some of the need for public spaces in the city. Furthermore, the design of the center will help create a sense of place and identity for the Butler County. The design of the center can serve as precedent for future development in the district.

PROGRAMS:

FUNCTION		CAPACITY	AREA SQ.FT
Community Center			3000
For Community Organization Use	Auditorium	300X1	5400
	Dressing Room	10X2	200X2
	Rehearsal Room	30X1	400
	Multifunction Room	100X1	2500
	Open Offices	1X5	150X5
	Ticket Box	3X1	200
	Cafe	50X1	3600
	Commons Area		1500
Youth Center	Classrooms	25X3	500X3
	Studios	25X3	500X3

	Multimedia Room	25X1	500X1
	Activity Room	30X1	600X1
	Multipurpose Gym	20X1	800X1
	Snack Bar & Kitchen	20X1	500X1
	Offices	1X5	150X5
Early Learning Center	Classrooms	25X3	500X3
	Activity Room	25X3	500X3
	Parent Waiting Room	10X1	300X1
	Offices	1X1	150X1
Senior Center	Classrooms	25X1	400X1
	Studios	25X1	400X1
	Reading Room	40X1	1000X1
	Fitness Center	20X1	400X1
	Activity Room	1X1	400X1
	Administrative Offices	1X1	150
	Commons Areas		2000
Cultural Center and Language School	Language Classrooms	20X3	400X3
	Art Craft Studio	20X1	400X1
	Traditional Dance Studio	20X1	600X1
	Calligraphy Studio	20X1	400X1
	Multifunction Classrooms	30X1	500X1
	Multifunction Studios	30X1	500X1
	Commons Areas		2000
	Administrative Offices	1X5	150X5
Professional Offices			10000
Retails			10000
Hotels	Restaurant		1500
	Gym		1500
	Guestrooms	30	250X30
	Meeting Room	20	300
	Reception Area	10	500

	Commons Area		1500
Residential			10000

CASE STUDY:

Through years, the Chinese developed their own unique architecture, satisfying functional needs while expressing their own philosophy, character, spirit, feelings and ideas of the builder and beholder. Abstract these elements and apply them in the design would create a familiar feeling through buildings and space, so that a sense of belongingness would be revoked among Chinese community. For the following part, I take a deep insight into some successful designs which demonstrate strong Chinese tradition.

The Great Bamboo Wall is a guesthouse located to the Great Wall. With this project, the architect made extensive use of the bamboo material which integrated the traditional eastern architectural style with the western spatial features, thus embody the oriental culture and artistic style (Figure 1).

The building is enclosed with bamboo, from the outside to the inside, or even the sliding doors in the living room use bamboo material. A similar wall of bamboo meanders through the house like a porous screen, generating a play of light and shadow that owes much of its resonance to the historical familiarity of bamboo in the Asian home (Figure 2). The permeability of the bamboo walls allows the space to be sensed from within the rest of the house, and occupants can see through it to the landscape outside. The light penetrates through the bamboo façade, contrast with the dark grey stone floor and transparent full height window. Indoors, the material encloses the stairwell and living spaces to achieve great effect in this spaces. Positioned side by side at varying intervals, bamboo shoots seem to hover above the floor, creating breezy, floating partitions.

Bamboo is considered to have significant meaning among Chinese culture. It is viewed as a symbol of traditional Chinese value: Its deep roots denotes resoluteness; its tall, straight stem represents honor; its hollow interior modesty and its clean and Spartan exterior exemplify chastity. To the Chinese people, bamboo is a symbol of virtue. It reflects people's soul and emotions.

The most fascinating part of the Great Bamboo Wall is the teahouse (Figure 3), which is encircled by lean bamboos on four sides. A stepping stone was across the water surface, leading to a meditation space. While sipping tea inside, one can spot a beacon tower on the Great Wall looming through the crevices in the bamboo walls. The teahouse creates a peaceful and implicit spiritual place. It allows people to respond directly to the nature and thus relax their mind to the maximum.



Figure 1. Exterior View

Figure 2. Bamboo Porous Screen

Figure 3. Teahouse

Resource: Bognár, Botond, and Kengo Kuma. 2005. Kengo Kuma: selected works. New York: Princeton Architectural Press.

The next picture is the Suzhou Museum, designed by I.M Pei. Located in the historical district of the city, the design was inspired from the surroundings and notably the garden of Suzhou in designing, and it successfully revokes people's memory of traditional Chinese culture. (Figure 4). The main color used in the building are black and white, reminding people of those ancient town in Southeast China. The same as in traditional Suzhou architecture, the design of the museum is organized around a series of gardens and courtyards that mediate between the building and its surrounding environment. The courtyard and buildings varied in size, to keep the space on a human scale. The museum also includes water surface, rock works, trees and flowers, and they are connected by winding paths and zig-zag galleries (Figure 5). Just like a classical Chinese garden, the museum presented the visitors with a series of perfectly composed and framed glimpses of scenery, a view of a pond, or of a rock, or a groove of bamboo, or a blossoming tree (Figure 6). By moving from building to building, visitors can view a series of carefully composed scenes, unrolling like a scroll of landscape paintings.



Figure 4. The inner courtyard of the museum and its tea pavilion

Figure 5. Carefully Selected trees grace the gardens within the museum

Figure 6. A hexagonal window frames the view toward the trees in the courtyard

Glass Pavilion at the Toledo Museum of Art, designed by SANNA, is also a place which is highly related to the spirit of eastern culture. In this museum, each of the spaces is enclosed in clear glass, creating interesting sightlines through multiple layers of transparent walls. Because of the many layers of glass walls, the wall not only reflect and refract the spaces they enclose, they also visually project those spaces onto, through, and beyond on another. The effect creates visual complexity and spatial illusion. And it also bring ambiguity to the space: The glass outer walls are both reflective and transparent depending on the time of day, angle of the sun, and weather. At times they allow one to see deep into the center of the building and, in places, through to the opposite side. At other times they become reflective, bouncing back refracted images of trees, houses, and bodies moving among them; their glass surfaces layering glimpses of nature with self-reflection as they project images of the mind's eye through the spaces of the building and into the imagination (Figure 7). This simplicity and ambiguity is similar to the character of Chinese ink drawing (Figure 8). When the black ink drop on the paper, blurring and spreading slowly, it feels like the views in the building is un-rolling in front of one's eyes. Besides, the transparency of the wall blurs the boundary of interior and exterior, allowing the visitor to response directly to the nature. This reflects the Chinese traditional philosophy of "mutuality of heaven and people" (Figure 9).



Figure 7. Glass Pavillion



Figure 8. Chinese Water Ink Drawing

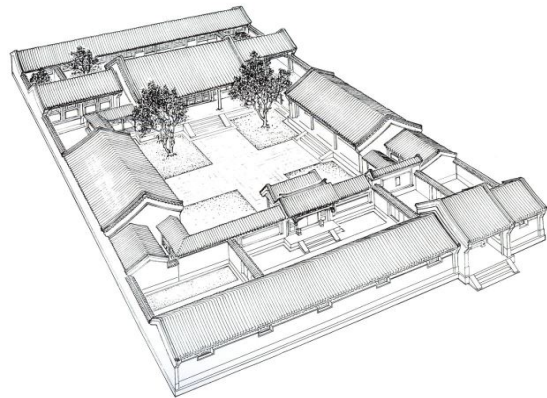


Figure 9. Glass Pavilian

The Xiangshan Campus, designed by Shu Wang, is also a successfully example evoking people's memory of their traditional culture. The design creates a thoroughly contemporary construction imbued with the aura of the traditional. Basically, the courtyard configuration of the buildings of the campus are a

Figure 10. Xiangshan Campus

Figure 11. Typical Chinese Courtyard



reference to traditional Chinese courtyard residence (Figure 10). It is consisted of a cluster of several U-shape buildings which enclosed courtyard in the center. These enclosed spaces serve many purposes for each building - for events, gatherings, class, relaxation and even for climate control to help encourage ventilation and a micro climate. The choice of themes is directed by traditional construction culture and its continuation: Garden making, construction, differentiation, material recycling and reuse. Through applying such layout, the design allows for maximum daylight penetration and cross-ventilation, and with each individual building wraps around a central courtyard, reducing travel distance between opposing wings and minimizing the overall footprint.

The courtyard is a very important theme in Chinese culture. In ancient China, big houses in China are measured by how many courtyard they have, and layout of the courtyard reflects the hierarchy of each family member (Figure 11). The Chinese courtyard is a good expression of the Confucian philosophy. The courtyard space is enclosed around the perimeter and open in the center. This enclosure provides a sense of security to the family members. The sealed boundary and defined entrance produce a defensive feature, and the open interior space stimulate communication for family members. Besides, the courtyard serves as a transitional space from the exterior and interior, public space, semi-public space, and private place, forming an interesting space sequence. And this better embodies the personality of implicit of Chinese people.

STRUCTURE

The oriental architectures have a long history with timber structures, which is different from the western architecture mainly made of stone. In China, the exploration and incentive usage of timber has



Figure 12. Kafe Kurean



Figure 13. Wood Bridge Museum

formed unique Chinese characteristic. One example can be found in an ancient Chinese intelligent toy, “Kong Min Suo”. A few pieces are assembled together by interweaving and stitching. Entirely without nails and ropes, a stable and complete system can be created relying solely on mutual containment and interdependence. The load-bearing component, “dou gong”, which has been widely used in the ancient Chinese architecture, is also formed by a set of timber components laminating and combining with each other. The Kafe Kurean, is an example which follows the principle of dou gong, serving as the beams and columns for bear the loads of the building (Figure 12).

The wood bridge museum is also an innovative example of interpreting the traditional structure (Figure 13). The building is an arrangement of alternating and interwoven beams compose the wooden structure which appears to float in the air, supported by a single central pillar. Multiple interlocking bracket sets are formed by placing a large wooden block (dou) on a column to provide a solid base for the bow-shaped brackets (gong) that support the beam or another gong above it. Provides increased support for the weight of the horizontal beams that span the vertical columns or pillars by transferring the weight on horizontal beams over a larger area to the vertical columns. Those multiple sets of interlocking brackets or dougong reduces the amount of strain on the horizontal beams when transferring their weight to a column. Multiple dougongs also allows structures to be elastic and to withstand damage from earthquakes.

CONCLUSION

Local Chinese community is a geographically unbounded ethnic group which express their unique physical and psychological needs. Design a community center that will serve as a gathering space to bring different population together, the center will have public functions important for understanding Chinese culture. The arrangement of these spaces, the choice of materials and the expression of the layout reflects a unique Chinese American Style. By offering such a place, the cultural recognition would be shared and the unique identity and life style can be developed and promoted thus Chinese cultural heritage would be better interpreted while assimilating to a new style.

SITE SELECTION

The site is located in Oxford Ohio. It is a very small college town. I have looked at some vacant land around the town. There are four sites I visited and researched and I did a simple compare of the four sites.

SITE OPTION A:

It is located on the edge of the town and there isn't much pedestrian flow passing by. The site is surrounded by forest so it is comparatively independent from the communities nearby. It is closer to the bus route but it is far away from the campus (Figure 14).



Figure 14. Pictures of Site A

SITE OPTION B:

This site was used for Walmart. It is located near commercial area and surrounded by groceries stores and fast food restaurant. Since the Walmart already moved out there is a vacant building left with eye-soring parking lot in front of it (Figure 15).



Figure 15. Pictures of Site B

SITE OPTION C:

Located behind the old Talawanda high school which was also moved to another place. The building will not be seen from the street and the entrance to the site is not that obvious either. (Figure 16)



Figure 16. Pictures of Site C

SITE OPTION D:

This site is located behind business school and it is the closest site to campus among the four options. It is surrounded by student housings and other campus department buildings. It is within the “red brick” area, which represents typical architectural style in Oxford. The site is now an outdoor park. There are trees and a small creek in the site. There are also barbecue pits and outdoor seating. If I use this site, I need to consider how to design a building without destroying the nice environment there and maintain the current outdoor activities (Figure 17).



Figure 17. Pictures of Site D

After the rough analyze, the site option caught my eye due to its design potentials. The site used to belong to Walmart. Since the Walmart moved out, now it is just an abandoned building with vacant parking lot. This place is part of the commercial area in Oxford, and it is located right on the gateway of the city, and it is supposed to be an interesting place. But the current situation is very disappointing. I pick this place, because I am going to change it.

DESIGN PROJECT

Overall saying, my design faces three challenges: how to make the design consistent with the site, how to interpret Chinese culture with architectural language, and how to make it Chinese but also International. My design is going to address these three issues.

In order to answer this question, we need to understand what is Chinese culture? Some people think Chinese means dragons and lanterns. Hollywood thinks Chinese is Mulan and Kung Fu Panda. Some architects think Chinese is a traditional way of living and certain activities. But in my understanding, Chinese is a state of mind, it has something to do with meditation. It expresses itself in people's personality as being implicit. It expressed itself in Chinese culture by being subtle. It expressed itself in architecture as being simplicity, ambiguity and purity. And my design is trying to activate this state of mind in people. It is not just in me, it's in everybody. Everyone has that state of mind in you, regardless of your skin color or your background. This is what we have in common and this connects us together. And this is how you resonate with my design. It is the ambience and feelings that evoke a familiarity in Chinese and it is this familiarity which we all share that ties people of different races together. And this is how it makes my design Chinese and also international.